

WASHINGTON, DC - House Majority Leader Steny H. Hoyer (MD) joined Reps. Ed Perlmutter (CO) and Marcia L. Fudge (OH), and families who are at risk of being or who have been denied health care coverage because of a pre-existing condition at a press conference today, calling for health reform that ends discrimination based on a person's health status. Below are his remarks as prepared for delivery:

"For far too many decades, we have labored under a health care system that is unworthy of our great country. It has consistently stood against two of our most cherished American principles: opportunity and equality.

"It has stifled opportunity because it has forced too many Americans to make life decisions not on the merits, but on the availability of health coverage. It has worked against the mobility and entrepreneurship that strong economies thrive on. That is why we need reform that ensures Americans security no matter whether they move, lose their jobs, change their jobs, or strike out on their own.

"Our health care system has also stood against equality. Insurers are regularly permitted to discriminate against Americans with pre-existing health conditions. As a result, millions of Americans have found it essentially impossible to secure health coverage. That must change, as well.

"Democrats' health care reform will insist that no insurance company be allowed to discriminate against any American on the basis of health status. For so many of our fellow citizens, that will mean peace-of-mind, security, and a first chance at affordable coverage.

"I'm proud to be joined by Representatives Perlmutter and Fudge, and the families here with us today who have had their dreams and opportunities curtailed because of insurance discrimination.

"Their stories deserve to be heard. Because they can inspire us to pass a bill that finally brings them health security-and prevents similar stories from ever happening to our friends, families, or neighbors again."

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